This record is a partial extract of the original cable. The full text of the original cable is not available.

C O N F I D E N T I A L ANKARA 001207

SIPDIS

E.O. 12958: DECL: 02/24/2013
TAGS: PREL PGOV TU IZ
SUBJECT: ON THE EVE OF THE IRAQ VOTE: WHICH WAY WILL TURKEY GO?

(U) Classified by DCM RSDeutsch. Reasons: 1.5 (b)(d).

¶1. (C) P.M. Gul's cabinet formally submitted a combined draft resolution -- covering deployment of U.S. troops through Turkey and deployment of Turkish forces abroad -- to Parliament Feb. 24. Given procedural requirements, the earliest Parliament can begin debate will be 1500 local (0800 Washington time) on Tuesday, Feb. 25. Deputy P.M. Sener announced publicly that the Government decided to send the petition to Parliament even though "an important" number of ministers "did not find it convincing," though in the end they joined their colleagues and signed on. Gul is discussing the matter with President Sezer, whose insistence on international legitimacy via new UNSC authority remains strong and public.

¶2. (C) In Feb. 24 conversations with us, AK leader Erdogan and other senior contacts from across the political spectrum -- members of parliament, journalists, think tanks, NGO and labor groups -- in the main expressed the belief that the ruling AK Party/Government will prevail on its skeptical parliamentary group to support passage of the resolution.

-- Erdogan told the Ambassador they would "do all we can" to secure parliamentary support, but cautioned that there will have to be some unspecified compromises on the USG-GOT political, economic, and military agreements currently being negotiated.

-- Sukru Elekdag, retired ambassador and current member of opposition CHP, confirmed that his party will vote as a bloc against the AK resolution: "We see no urgency for war, and we think the inspection regime should be strengthened and given more time." Other CHP M.P.s -- including Foreign Affairs Committee member Emin Koc, former minister Abdulkadir Ates, pollster Bulent Tanla, and Kurdish tribal leader Esat Canan -- echoed one another in declaring that CHP "will 100% reject" the resolution, although Koc and Canan opined that Erdogan has the votes to make it pass.

-- Former NSC staffer and current executive director of the Advanced Strategy Center Faruk Demir avowed that the AK Government petition will pass if Erdogan, as he expects, backs it.

-- Wire service Anadolu Ajansi Parliament bureau chief Faruk Albayrak explained to us Feb. 24 that because the voting will take place in a closed session, the chance for passage is "much better than 50%."

-- Parliamentary legal expert Levent Kocak averred that "there will be some minor objections but the draft will pass."

-- Labor union leaders Feridun Tankut (Steelworkers Union chairman) and Bulent Pirler (Employers Union secretary general) claimed that the resolution will pass. However, Salim Uslu (president of the Islamist-oriented HAK-Is Union) said the result will depend on how much the AK government works on its parliamentary group.

-- Speaker of parliament (and potential AK party rival to both Gul and Erdogan) Bulent Arinc publicly declared that "it would not be right" for the government to submit a draft without establishing that a possible operation has "international legitimacy" in line with the requirements of article 92 of the Turkish constitution.

Comment

¶3. (C) We expect AK will use its parliamentary majority to pass the resolution. However, in waiting until virtually the

last minute, and in failing to convince speaker Arinc, AK leaders may not have prepared the ground in parliament sufficiently, and there is a chance that the draft could fail. Moreover, as Erdogan himself suggested, the draft USG-GOT papers and MOUs loom large in the minds of the AK leadership and in the legislature; all hinges on whether they will be completed before the vote.
PEARSON